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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE  
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ANZIO (OPERATION SHINGLE):  
AN OPERATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

by

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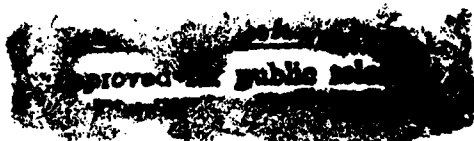
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The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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## ABSTRACT

### ANZIO (OPERATION *SHINGLE*): AN OPERATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

This case study analyzes the role of operational art in Allied operations at Anzio, Italy and the battle for Rome (January 22-June 4, 1944). As part of the Allied Campaign in Italy, the amphibious assault on Anzio—code-named Operation *Shingle*, and the subsequent drive to Rome remains one of the most controversial military operations in history. Although the Allies eventually captured Rome from the Germans, the failure to use 'operational thinking' led to a poorly planned and executed operation.

Most historical accounts blame the failures at Anzio on the lack of aggressiveness by the Operation *Shingle* commander Major General John P. Lucas. However, when viewed in the larger context of the strategy to defeat Germany and the Allied Campaign in Italy, Operation *Shingle* is a showcase of failure at the operational level of war. Political rather than military considerations drove *Shingle*—dooming the operation from the start.

Anzio demonstrates the importance of linking tactical actions to operational and strategic objectives. At the strategic level of war, the Allies had a sound strategy to defeat Germany. However, at the operational level of war, the decision to launch *Shingle* did not adequately assess risk. In operational design, commanders failed to define an objective, lacked sufficient mass, and did not include alternative plans based on potential enemy actions. During planning and preparation, the Allies misjudged the enemy's center of gravity and failed to exploit valuable intelligence. During execution, operational leadership lacked initiative. Finally, the complexity and tensions created by the combined operation made unity of effort difficult. These lessons should benefit future operations.

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## PREFACE

Controversy over the strategy, planning, and execution of military operations in the Mediterranean existed well before the Italian Campaign started in September 1943. However, even after fifty years of in-depth analysis by military commanders and historians, the controversy surrounding the decisions made, and reasons for Allied mistakes during the Italian Campaign have not been definitively answered. In contrast to the many historical accounts of tactical actions and commanding generals at Anzio, this study will focus on the operational level of war, and the role of 'operational art' in the ill-fated operation at Anzio—Operation *Shingle*. Anzio demonstrates the importance of understanding the relationship between the ends and the means, and consideration of risks at the operational level of war. Importantly, the Allies failed to cooperate in both joint and combined operations.

Although the sources used to develop the conclusions in this paper were written and published over a period of fifty years (1944-1994), a determined effort was made to include sources from those directly involved in the operation. To this end, works by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, General Henry M. Wilson, Lieutenant General Mark W. Clark, Major General Lucian K. Truscott, and the British war correspondent Wynford Vaughan-Thomas were researched. Also, the personal diary of Major General John P. Lucas, Commander of the U.S. Army VI Corps, who is often blamed for the failures at Anzio was reviewed. Finally, reports from the Supreme Allied Commander—Mediterranean, the United States Army official history, and British historians were researched to develop an understanding of events from a historical perspective.

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# **ANZIO (OPERATION *SHINGLE*): AN OPERATIONAL PERSPECTIVE**

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

After fifty years of in-depth analysis, the Allied amphibious assault at Anzio, Italy and the battle for Rome (January 22-June 4, 1944) remains one of the most controversial military operations in history. While many historians blame the difficulties at Anzio on the apparently inept leadership of the task force commander, Major General John P. Lucas, the operation was flawed from the start. The failure of the Allies to use 'operational thinking' directly contributed to the 94,000 Allied casualties suffered in the battle for Rome—not to mention diverting massive amounts of resources to a secondary theater of operations on the eve of the invasion of France.<sup>1</sup>

The reasons behind Anzio are clear—to break the stalemate in southern Italy and capture Rome. However, the plan broke down at the operational level. Disagreement and distrust among the Allies led to confusion over what Anzio would achieve. Essentially, there was no agreement on how the operation would work.<sup>2</sup> Without a clear concept of operations, Lucas was given an impossible task—conduct an amphibious assault with just two divisions, to draw off eighteen German divisions from southern Italy and capture Rome!

The amphibious landing at Anzio—code-named Operation *Shingle*—was driven by political versus military considerations. Churchill's personal involvement in the planning and his insistence to launch Operation *Shingle*, disregarded the high military risks involved. His overriding obsession to capture Rome and restore British prestige among the Allies restricted 'operational art' in the design, planning, and execution of the operation. Key factors such as

determining the military conditions for success, developing a sequence of actions to achieve the objectives, effective use of limited resources, and finally, a thorough assessment of the risks were not made.<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, Anzio was not another Gallipoli or Dunkirk, ending in disaster. Anzio is remarkable since in the end, the Allies were able to recover from their early mistakes, and achieve their operational and strategic objectives. By analyzing the Allied failures—and successes—to use operational art in the battle for Rome, important lessons can be learned for future operations.

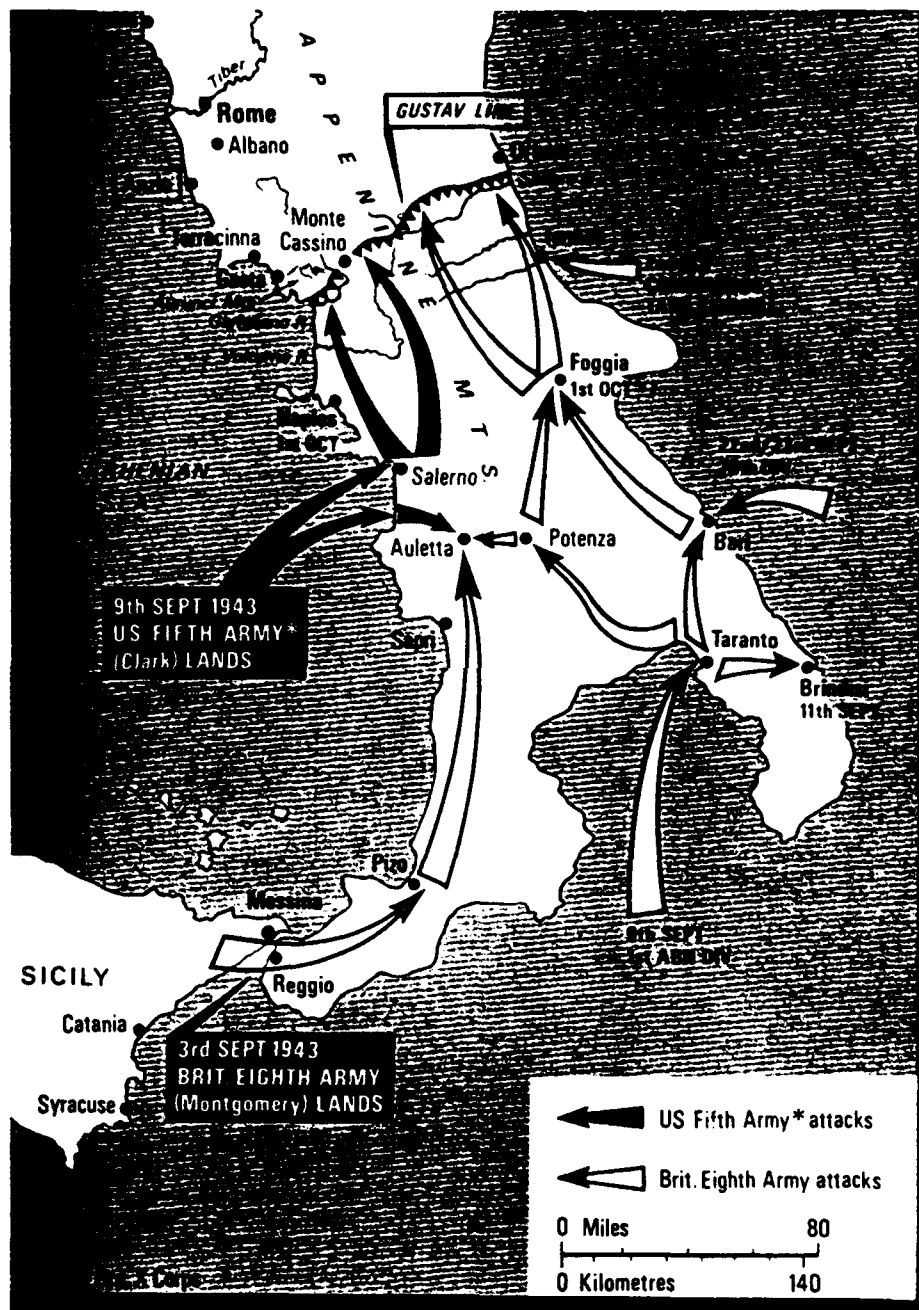
### **Strategic Framework**

During the closing months of 1943 the Allies found themselves in a frustrating stalemate in southern Italy. After starting the Italian Campaign with a series of massive amphibious landings at Salerno in early September 1943, the fighting in Italy had been extremely difficult. By November, the U.S. Fifth Army, under the command of Lieutenant General Mark W. Clark, and the British Eighth Army, commanded by General Bernard L. Montgomery, had advanced slowly up the Italian peninsula. Field Marshal Albert Kesselring's German Tenth Army was retreating into the Apennine Mountains. It was here that Hitler decided to anchor the German defense and hold on as long as possible.<sup>4</sup> The Allied advance to Rome had been stopped.

Known as the Gustav Line, the German defensive positions stretched across the entire Italian peninsula along the Garigliano River to Cassino to the town of Ortona on the Adriatic sea. (Figure 1) The line, protected by a natural barrier of rivers, rugged mountains and steep cliffs—was fortified by an extensive network of trenches, machine-gun emplacements, minefields, concrete bunkers and pillboxes. Defended by eighteen divisions of Kesselring's German Tenth Army, the Gustav Line was an impregnable barrier. Just north of the Gustav Line was



FIGURE 1  
MAP--ITALIAN FRONT 15 JANUARY 1944



Source: Hibbert, Anzio: The Bid For Rome, p. 13.

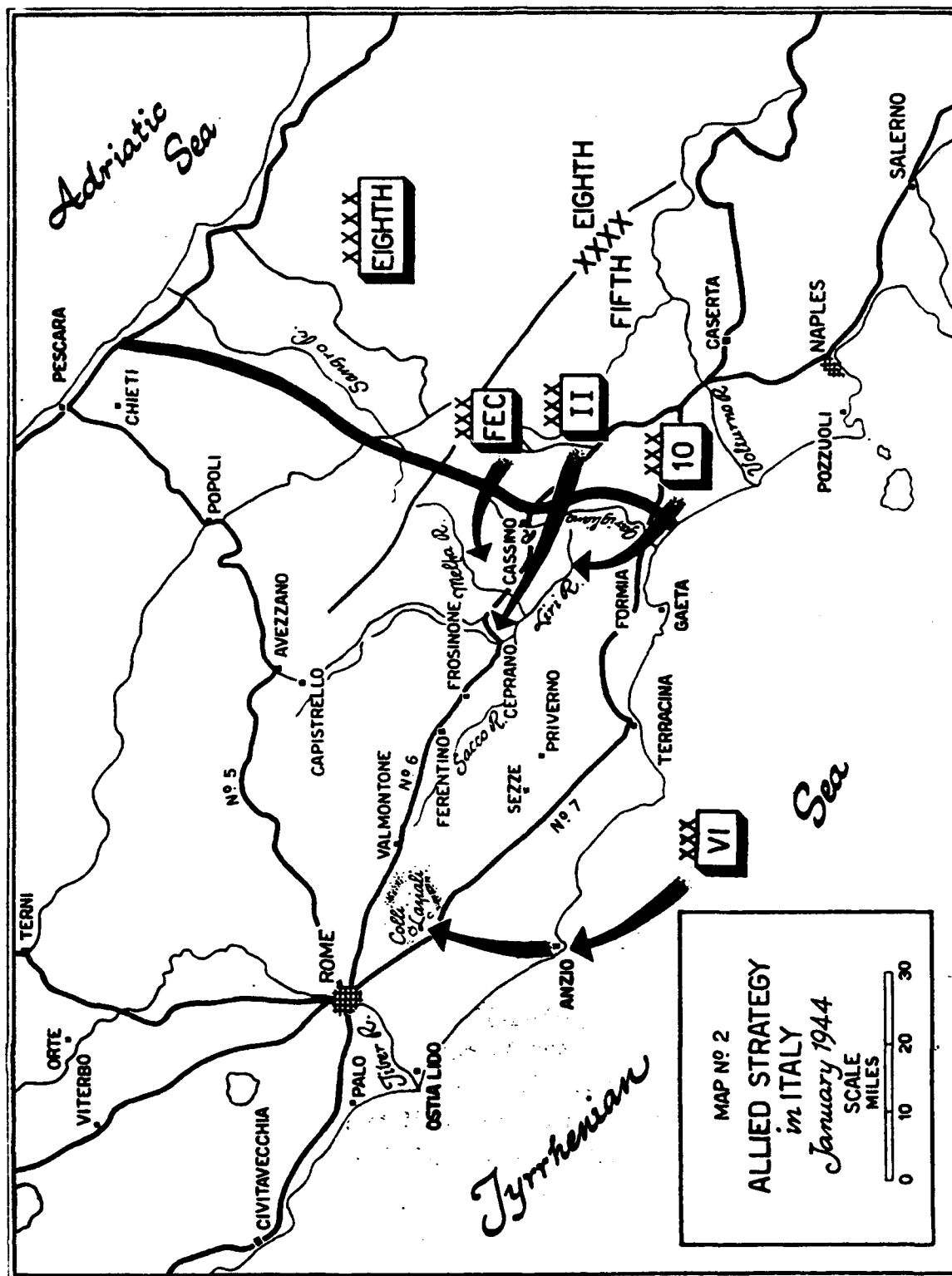
the Liri Valley, a natural corridor where critical lines of communication led to Rome, Austria, and Germany.

Some of the most difficult fighting of the war, reminiscent of the trench warfare of World War I took place in the mountainous terrain, rain, snow and the exceptionally cold winter of Italy in 1943-44. Continued attempts by the Allies to breach the German defenses and capture the town of Cassino were repulsed. Something had to be done to break the stalemate. By December it was apparent the Allies would have to go around the German defenses with an amphibious landing behind German lines. Anzio became the answer.<sup>5</sup>

The basic concept of operations for Anzio was relatively simple. An amphibious landing south of Rome would create a diversion, drawing enemy forces away from the Gustav Line—allowing the Fifth and Eighth Armies to break through the weakened defenses. The amphibious force would then drive south and meet up with the advancing U.S. Fifth Army in the Liri Valley cutting off vital enemy lines of communication.<sup>6</sup> (Figure 2) At the operational level of war Anzio made sense. The operation was conceived to support Allied strategic objectives. First, it is important to understand what the Allies were trying to accomplish during the Italian Campaign.

Allied Strategic Considerations Following the Allied victory in North Africa and the subsequent invasion of Sicily in July 1943, the Allied Combined Chiefs of Staff met at Quebec (code-named *Quadrant*) to determine their strategy for the second half of 1943. This conference again highlighted the strategic differences among the Allies which had existed since the United States entered the war in December 1941. The Americans led by U.S. Army Chief of Staff, General George Marshall, argued that a direct attack on northern Europe was the best strategy to defeat Germany. While the British, led by Prime Minister Winston Churchill, maintained that a cross-Channel invasion of northern France (code-named *Overlord*) was too risky until the odds were firmly in favor of the Allies.

FIGURE 2



Reproduced by U.S. Army Center of Military History, May 1945

Source: U.S. Army, Fifth Army History, Part IV, p. 26.

Although the British agreed an attack on northern Europe was inevitable, Churchill successfully argued the only feasible theater of operations for 1943 was the Mediterranean—"the soft underbelly of the Axis." As summarized by General Marshall, "The essence of the problem was whether or not the required conditions for a successful *Overlord* could only be made possible by an increase of strength in the Mediterranean."<sup>7</sup>

When it became apparent that an Allied invasion of northern France would not occur in 1943, a campaign on mainland Italy was selected as the best alternative. At the strategic level of war, the British argued the Italian Campaign offered a theater of operations where the Allies could fight the Axis, while mobilizing for a direct attack on Germany's center of gravity—the German Army in central Europe. But, American approval for the Italian Campaign was qualified. The Americans saw any effort to expand operations in the Mediterranean as a threat to *Overlord*.

Clearly, the Mediterranean was a secondary theater of operations. At *Quadrant*, after the insistence of the Americans, the Combined Chiefs agreed to give priority to *Overlord* targeted for the spring of 1944. In preparation for *Overlord*, seven divisions, supplies, ammunition, aircraft, and all available shipping would be transferred immediately from the Mediterranean to the United Kingdom.

Also at *Quadrant*, Eisenhower, then Allied Commander in Chief—Mediterranean, was given a difficult assignment. At the same time resources were being transferred from the Mediterranean, he was to invade mainland Italy across the Strait of Messina and the Gulf of Salerno, and advance to Rome. The only clear objectives of the campaign were to knock Italy out of the war, and establish Allied air bases within striking range of Germany and the oil fields in Romania.<sup>8</sup> Although not a stated objective, some historians have interpreted the Italian Campaign as a major strategic diversion. Some historians argue, by

launching a campaign on mainland Italy, Hitler would be forced to maintain large numbers of troops in a secondary theater—keeping them away from northern France, where *Overlord* would take place the next spring.<sup>9</sup> But, the campaign would also divert Allied resources.

From an 'operational art' perspective, in hindsight the Italian Campaign was a strategic mistake. If the Italian Campaign was in fact designed as a diversion, it was a failure! A diversion—especially in a secondary theater of operations—under the principle of 'economy of force', should devote significantly fewer forces than the enemy commits to counter the operation. However, in Italy this was not the case. By May 1944, the Allies committed over 670,000 troops against 400,000 German troops; the Allies had 4,000 aircraft in Italy compared to the Luftwaffe's 450—while Allied tanks outnumbered German tanks 1,900 to 450.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, Churchill constantly pressured his commanders that Rome must be taken by the end of 1943. In addition to the military value of Rome, the 'eternal city,' the capital of a former Axis power, had a psychological significance. Thus, the capture of Rome became the focus of the Italian Campaign. Its capture would be a symbolic victory for its captors.<sup>11</sup>

However, the operational center of gravity in the Italian Campaign was the German Army, not Rome. The Allies' operational objective should have been the defeat of the German Army, rather than a 'race' to Rome. If the *Shingle* force marched into Rome on the first day, the Campaign would not have been won. Under this condition, the German Army would remain a significant threat to the Allies. Given the Allied strategy, Rome may have been a suitable intermediate operational objective—cutting off the German lines of communications. This operational objective would then lead to subsequent operational objectives of defeating the German Tenth Army in the south.

Political Issues As a strategic backdrop for Anzio, Churchill was very concerned with the role and influence of Great Britain in the aftermath of the war. With the series of major Soviet victories on the Eastern Front and the massive buildup of American forces in Europe, Britain's role had diminished. The campaign in Italy offered a last chance for Britain to play a major role in the war. Prestige, relative standing among the Allies, and influence over the post-war settlement were at stake. When Eisenhower departed in December 1943 to command *Overlord*, General Henry M. Wilson became Supreme Allied Commander—Mediterranean, giving Churchill enormous influence over the Italian Campaign.<sup>12</sup> As 1943 came to a close, Churchill was extremely frustrated with the stalemate in southern Italy, "The seizure of Rome", Churchill decided, "would restore British preeminence among the Allies. The best way to Rome was through Anzio."<sup>13</sup>

By December 1943 the stage was set for Operation *Shingle*. The Allies were pitted in a virtual stalemate along the Gustav Line, Churchill was determined that Rome must be captured by the end of the year, and the command structure put the British in firm control of military operations in the Mediterranean. But, since the Campaign in Italy was a secondary theater of operations, Churchill was faced with strong opposition to expand the war in Italy. Resources were short in supply and everything available would be directed towards *Overlord*.

## CHAPTER II

### DECISION

*Anzio was my worst moment of the war. I had most to do with it.*  
—Churchill

Throughout the fall of 1943, the decision to launch an amphibious landing behind the German defenses in southern Italy went back and forth. At the operational level, three principle problems plagued the decision: the availability of shipping to support the initial landing and resupply, the size of the assault force, and the distance between Anzio and the main front.<sup>14</sup>

Consideration of breaking the stalemate at Cassino with an amphibious assault began in October 1943. However, independent assessments by the Fifth Army and Eisenhower both concluded that from a military perspective such an operation was not feasible, "...the practical obstacles seemed insuperable...mine fields offshore, the strength of coastal defenses, and most important, the distance of the land forces from the projected landing areas, which would make their quick link-up with a beachhead impossible."<sup>15</sup> Although Eisenhower was not against the idea of Anzio, he considered the operation to be risky and believed it would need more than the limited number of forces available.<sup>16</sup> This assessment turned out to be correct. By the time the battle for Rome was won in June 1944, over seven divisions would be put ashore at Anzio.

The idea for *Shingle* was resurrected on November 8, 1943, when General Alexander, Commander of Allied Armies in Italy, ordered the Fifth Army to plan an amphibious operation to break the stalemate in Italy. He envisioned a three phased operation including: sequential offensives by the British Eighth and U.S. Fifth Armies, and an amphibious assault south of Rome.

Alexander's plan called for a single division to conduct an amphibious landing on December 20, 1943. But, with the failure of the Fifth and Eighth Armies to break through the Gustav Line in early December, and the lack of

landing craft to support the assault, the operation was again determined to be too risky. With a majority of available landing craft to be transferred to Great Britain no later than January 15, 1944, it appeared Anzio was finally a dead issue. On December 18, Operation *Shingle* was cancelled.<sup>17</sup>

It was only through Churchill's personal interest that Operation *Shingle* was revived. However, the decision became a political versus a military issue.<sup>18</sup> After attending a conference in Cairo in early December 1943, Churchill became ill and was forced to stay in Carthage, Tunisia. The stalemate in Italy dominated his agenda. After a series of meetings with British military advisors, and an exchange of messages with his staff in London, Churchill was convinced that if adequate shipping could be obtained for a two division assault, it would have a decisive effect on the campaign. However, details of the complex amphibious assault, the anticipated enemy reaction, and the difficulty of synchronizing a Fifth Army drive against strong German resistance were not discussed. Churchill categorically brushed off the complexities and risks involved.<sup>19</sup>

The decision to launch *Shingle* was essentially made on December 27, 1943 when Roosevelt agreed to Churchill's personal note requesting to delay the transfer of fifty-six LSTs (Landing Ship Tanks) from the Mediterranean until February 5, 1944.<sup>20</sup> Eisenhower was not even consulted on the decision, and key operational commanders were not invited to critical decision meetings.<sup>21</sup> Through his powerful influence, Churchill was responsible for the decision. "Once the question of landing craft and a two-division force were resolved, the extensive documentation of this period reflects no questioning of the operation's potentially negative side....No one dared challenge the assumptions on which *Shingle* was based."<sup>22</sup> *Shingle* was set for January 22, 1944.



### CHAPTER III

#### PLANNING AND PREPARATION

Major General John P. Lucas, Commander of the U.S. Army VI Corps, was appointed as the Operation *Shingle* task force commander on December 27, 1943. *Shingle* command relationships essentially fell within the existing operational chain of command. However, the task force composition included a mixture of American and British divisions which sometimes competed with each other for missions and politically important objectives.

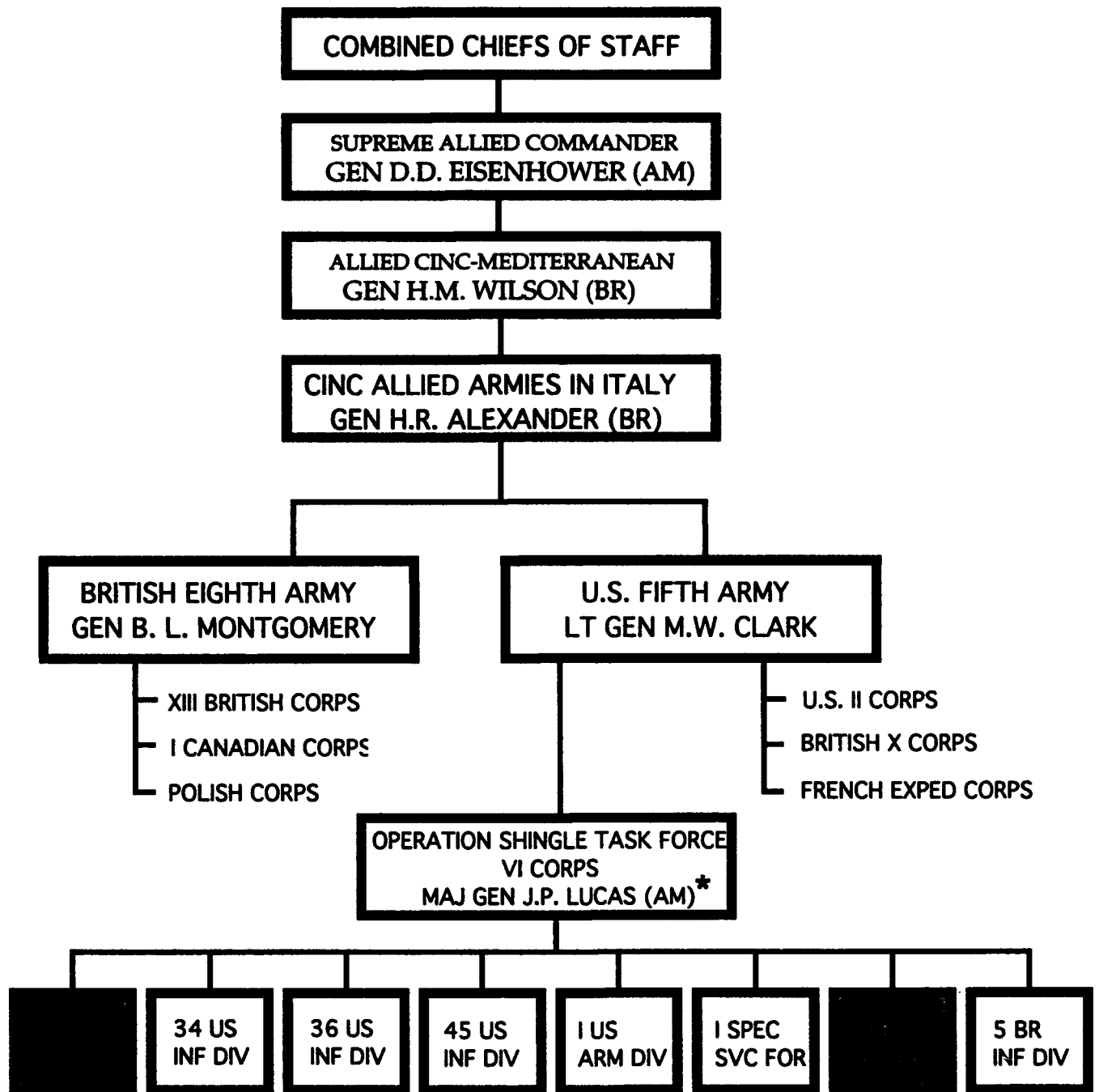
#### Command Relationships

In command of Allied forces in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations was General Harold M. Wilson. Directly subordinate to General Wilson, was General Harold R. Alexander who had operational command of Allied Armies in Italy. Although the operational command structure below Alexander was relatively simple (Figure 3), egos, distrust and rivalry between the Allies sometimes distorted unity of effort. Specifically, General Clark, constantly criticized British performance in Italy, creating an adversarial relationship with British commanders.<sup>23</sup> Importantly, Clark believed the British may attempt to take credit for the accomplishments of *his* Fifth Army. In addition, Lucas was very critical of the British.


Complicating unity of command, General Alexander was not willing to stress Allied relationships by taking operational command over U.S. Forces. In fact on several occasions, Churchill advised Alexander do not "urge"—"order." He added, "Do not hesitate to give orders [to the Americans] just as you would your own men."<sup>24</sup> Given Alexander's lassie-faire leadership style, on several occasions Clark disregarded Alexander's direct orders—potentially to the point of insubordination.

FIGURE 3

ALLIED COMMAND RELATIONSHIPS



\* Replaced by Maj Gen Truscott 2/22/44

 Indicates original forces planned for Operation Shingle. Other units added as operational reserve or reinforcements.

Source: John Ellis. *Cassino: The Hollow Victory*, pp. 556-560.

## Concept of Operations

From an 'operational art' perspective, a major problem for Operation *Shingle* was the failure of commanders to define a clear objective. "Everyone understood what the amphibious landing was to accomplish—to get the Allies into Rome—but exactly how the operation was to produce the desired result was never quite clear."<sup>25</sup> *Shingle* did not link tactical actions to operational objectives. In fact there was disagreement among the Allies as to what would be accomplished. This uncertainty set the stage for failure.

The original planning order, approved in December 1943 by General Alexander, established three phases for Operation *Shingle*. This order expressed the *intent* of Churchill and Alexander for the operation to take the Alban Hills southwest of Rome—making the capture of Rome inevitable. However, General Clark's final order issued on January 12, specified only two phases for Lucas' mission: "1) Seize and secure a beachhead in the vicinity of Anzio, and 2) Advance on Colli Laziali." The third phase, contained in Alexander's orders was deleted.<sup>26</sup> After receiving Clark's final orders, Lucas wrote in his diary,

It contained a very significant change in mission over that given for planning purposes...no mention was made of Rome whatever....*He made it clear that my primary mission was to seize and secure a beachhead.* The term 'advance on', which is an established military term meaning 'to move in the direction of', indicated in itself that the Army questioned my being able to reach this feature and, at the same time, hold a beachhead which would protect the port and beaches....*The impression was therefore given that 'Shingle' was a 'diversion' to attract enemy troops from the front of the Fifth Army where the main effort was to be made.*" (italics added)<sup>27</sup>

Clark's vague order completely changed the objective and intent of the operation—at least in Lucas' mind. The primary mission was now to secure a beachhead. "In effect Clark was telling Lucas to fight the battle as he saw fit even though doing so directly contradicted Alexander's intention to capture and hold the Alban Hills."<sup>28</sup>

From an 'operational art' viewpoint, the concept for Operation *Shingle* largely supported Allied strategic objectives as established during *Quadrant*. At the strategic level the Italian Campaign was aimed at tying down as many German troops as possible in a secondary theater of operations, to allow the Allies to defeat the German Army in western Europe. Under Alexander's concept of operations, the Anzio beachhead and the Alban Hills were major tactical objectives, while Rome was the operational objective. As conceived by Churchill and Alexander, Operation *Shingle* would attack Kesselring's vulnerable lines of communication centered in the Alban Hills. However, given Clark's 'revised' operational order, Lucas did not develop a sequence of military actions to achieve the operational objectives envisioned by Alexander. The concept of operations was not clear. In Lucas' mind, the primary mission was to secure a beachhead at Anzio. In Alexander's and Churchill's minds, Rome was the operational objective.

With vague orders, undefined objectives and insufficient forces to take the initiative, Lucas' operational plan did not address alternatives (i.e. sequels) for probable contingencies as *Shingle* unfolded. After the initial landing and buildup of the beachhead, there was no detailed plan. In fact Lucas' operational instruction to his subordinate commanders stated,

This directive does not include plans for an advance from the beachhead....Such plans are extremely tentative: this advance is not likely to take place unless it is synchronized with operations of the remainder of the Fifth Army in close vicinity of the beachhead.<sup>29</sup>

Central to the operation was synchronizing *Shingle* with an offensive by Fifth Army to break the Gustav Line. Therefore, a Fifth Army offensive along the Garigliano and Rapido Rivers was planned to begin on 12 January and to culminate on 20 January. Depending on the strength of the German resistance during the amphibious landing, Clark envisioned two possibilities. First, given strong German resistance at Anzio, the VI Corps was expected to take the

defensive. Alternatively, if the VI Corps was able to take the offensive, it would advance to the Alban Hills via the Albano road, or through Cisterna. Either route would sever the German lines of communication vital to the German Tenth Army in southern Italy.<sup>30</sup> Based on Clark's order, it was believed Lucas would make an operational decision, depending upon the situation. However, from the start Lucas had no intention of an immediate advance to Rome.

### Planning

Immediately following General Lucas' appointment as task force commander, a combined team of commanders and staff officers met at Caserta, Italy to develop detailed plans for *Shingle*. Over the next two weeks a plan was developed.

The Final Plan On January 12, General Clark approved the final plan for Operation *Shingle*. For the assault, the plan included three simultaneous amphibious landings at Anzio and the nearby town of Nettuno to begin at 0200 hours on January 22. The assault force would be made up of the British 3d Infantry Division and U.S. 1st Infantry Division, reinforced by three Ranger Battalions and a parachute battalion. In addition, the 45th U.S. Infantry Division be held in reserve to respond to potential enemy resistance.<sup>31</sup> Intelligence estimates indicated enemy resistance forces may have totaled 14,300 troops, with an estimated buildup to 31,000 by D+3.<sup>32</sup>

A two phased air attack was planned to support establishment of the beachhead. Prior to D-Day, air attacks would concentrate on destruction of enemy air forces and rail communications between Rome and the north. After D-day, the focus would be air superiority, bombing bridges and roads, and air interdiction of enemy troop concentrations to prevent enemy reinforcements from reaching the beachhead.<sup>33</sup> The Allies had over 61 squadrons of aircraft to support the ground effort, while most of the German air force had been

redeployed from Italy to Germany and Austria. Reinforcement of the German air force in Italy was not considered likely.<sup>34</sup>

To support the amphibious landings, naval forces were divided into two task groups (Task Force Peter and Task Force X-Ray). A total of 379 naval craft assigned. However, key resupply ships would only be available for one week before redeployment to southern France or England. Due to the probability of bad weather, the plan called for all supplies to be off-loaded within two days. In an attempt to achieve surprise, only a five minute naval bombardment to begin at H-5 minutes was included.<sup>35</sup>

Operational deception was a central element of *Shingle* planning. Although the Germans realized an amphibious assault north of the Gustav Line was probable, they were not sure when or where the landings would take place. To achieve surprise, *Shingle* plans included deception measures including secret agents planting false information with German intelligence officers, and establishing a fictional VI Corps headquarters at Corsica. This would be accomplished by sending a series of false radio broadcasts to indicate a landing would take place at Livorno. Finally, to disorient the Germans, Allied naval forces would bombard the port of Civitavecchia sixty miles north of Anzio, concurrent with the *Shingle* landings—and feint an amphibious landing.<sup>36</sup>

In the south, just prior to the amphibious assault, the Fifth Army on the Gustav Line was to make a strong offensive toward Cassino and Frosinone. It was at Frosinone that Alexander envisioned the link-up of the Fifth Army and VI Corps.<sup>37</sup>

### **Preparation**

General Lucas was concerned about the capability of the selected forces to successfully conduct a night amphibious landing in such a short time. After Lucas was informed that General Wilson would not consider any more

discussion of delaying *Shingle* for further preparation, Lucas wrote, "I felt like a lamb being taken to slaughter...as it gave me too little time for rehearsal....The real reasons cannot be military."<sup>38</sup>

General Lucas was adamant about conducting a rehearsal of the amphibious landing operation. However, due to the short preparation time, the availability of shipping assets and security requirements, an extensive rehearsal was not considered to be possible. Above all, Churchill rejected all requests for rehearsals as pointless and unnecessary. Churchill declared, "All troops [were] trained troops and needed no rehearsal."<sup>39</sup> But, since several VI Corps units had no experience with amphibious operations, Lucas insisted on a rehearsal. Just three days prior to D-day, on January 19th the VI Corps conducted a limited rehearsal near Salerno—with a big pay-off.

The rehearsal exposed many problems—everything went wrong. Transports were lost, some LSTs opened their doors 15 miles from the shore, men were drown, and a significant amount of equipment was lost at sea, including nineteen 105mm howitzers (one-third of the 3d Infantry Division's artillery). After six hours not a single tank or artillery piece made it to the shore. The 3d Infantry Division report to General Clark stated, "To land this division on Anzio beaches as it was landed during this rehearsal would be to invite disaster...there is a grave need for additional training."<sup>40</sup> However, repeated requests to delay *Shingle* for another rehearsal were denied.<sup>41</sup> Just one day after the disastrous rehearsal, Lucas and the VI Corps boarded their ships at Naples in final preparation for the assault. Political, not military factors dictated the shipping assets be released to support *Overlord*. There would be no delay for *Shingle*.

Lucas and his staff clearly understood the importance of logistics. Innovation and detailed planning allowed the Allies to overcome the obstacles of limited sealift. The Navy estimated it could land a seven day supply before the transport ships would have to depart for England. However, an analysis of the

Anzio beachhead by the VI Corps staff revealed the available LSTs, even if fully loaded, could not support the supply requirements. As a work around, supply planners came up with a plan for pre-loading 2.5-ton trucks with supplies, which could drive off the LSTs directly to the beachhead and be returned to Naples empty (the first roll-on/roll-off operation). Mobile piers were also devised to allow larger ships to unload in deep waters. In addition, the Allies developed procedures to quickly identify British versus American supply items as they were unloaded. These planning measures reduced unloading time from the normal twenty-four hours, to one hour per ship.<sup>42</sup> This resupply system may have ultimately saved the beachhead forces from defeat.

The primary logistics obstacle was the complexity of resupplying a combined British and American force. Therefore, standardization was planned whenever possible. For example, British vehicles were converted to allow use of U.S. petroleum, oil, and lubricants. But logistics problems did exist. The critical resupply issue was the vast types and quantity of ammunition used by the two forces. This could not be solved by standardization. As a mitigating factor, VI Corps planners developed an expedited method to identify and locate ammunition dumps to help reduce resupply problems. But, ammunition would remain a problem throughout the operation.<sup>43</sup>

A significant problem for the operational commanders was a lack of accurate intelligence. Even worse, critical intelligence existed, but was often *deliberately withheld* from the operational commanders who needed it most. Ultra was providing the Allies with a steady supply of detailed information on enemy movements and intentions. However, due to the need to hide the existence of Ultra from the enemy, information was tightly guarded. After cryptic statements from senior Allied commanders about the enemy situation in Italy, and chances for *Shingle's* success, Lucas remarked, "Apparently everyone is in on the secret of the German intentions but me."<sup>44</sup>



In fact, critical information was not given to Lucas. Significantly, prior to launching *Shingle*, Ultra revealed that enemy troops in the Anzio area had been redeployed to reinforce the Gustav Line. With no opposition, the VI Corps force could have advanced virtually unopposed through the Alban Hills to Rome. However, this information was not made available to Alexander, Clark or Lucas.<sup>45</sup> In contrast, Fifth Army intelligence estimates provided to Lucas indicated there would be strong German opposition.<sup>46</sup> Based on the available intelligence reports, Lucas' had erroneous doubts about the probability of a successful landing, no less an advance to Rome.

Operational reconnaissance included naval reconnaissance teams being sent ashore to determine potential landing sites and aerial observation. However, the aerial reconnaissance conducted on the west coast of Italy provided incomplete information to Lucas. Based on a lack of enemy activity near Anzio, it was correctly determined the Germans did not expect a landing on January 22. However, the reconnaissance did not reveal the redeployment of enemy forces from the Rome area to reinforce the Gustav Line. Lucas still believed it would be an opposed landing.

## CHAPTER IV

### OPERATIONS AT ANZIO

*I had hoped that we would be hurling a wildcat ashore,  
but all we got was a stranded whale.*

—Churchill

After weeks of detailed planning and preparation, at 0200 hours on January 22, 1944, the *Shingle* force poured onto the shores at Anzio and Nettuno. Miraculously, the 350 ship armada based out of Naples, was undetected by the Germans. As Lucas later wrote, "We achieved what is one of the most complete surprises in history. The Germans were caught off base and there was practically no opposition to the landing."<sup>47</sup>

The deception plans had worked. After leaving Naples, the convoy took an indirect route south toward Capri before heading north. At Civitavecchia, the diversionary assault was so successful that Kesselring ordered the port be destroyed immediately. In addition, Allied air attacks had temporarily disabled German reconnaissance aircraft based at Perugia, allowing the task force to enter Anzio unobserved.<sup>48</sup> As a result, Kesselring did not receive any reports of the landing until 0820.<sup>49</sup>

By midnight on D-day, 36,000 men, thousands of tons of supplies, and 3,200 vehicles were moved onto the beach at a cost of 13 killed, 97 wounded, and 44 missing.<sup>50</sup> Importantly, the harbor was taken intact, which Lucas considered to be an enormous unexpected advantage.<sup>51</sup> Over the next few hours there was a constant stream of reports detailing Allied successes, and the absence of expected German resistance. It appeared that Operation *Shingle* would be more successful than even the most optimistic proponents had dreamed.

However, all did not go as expected. To the south, Clark's Fifth Army failed to cross the Rapido River into the Liri Valley. Although the planned link-up at Frosinone would not happen, the Fifth Army offensive had forced Kesselring to

redeploy the two divisions from the Anzio/Rome area to reinforce the Gustav Line—essentially removing opposition forces from Anzio.<sup>52</sup>

Consistent with his orders, Lucas spent the first few days meticulously building the port complex at Anzio. Believing that the German lines of communications would permit a faster buildup of enemy forces by land than he could supply by sea, Lucas' first priority was to establish a firm beachhead—before taking the offensive. By the end of the first week, LSTs unloaded 70,000 troops, 500 artillery pieces, 250 tanks, and 27,000 tons of supplies at Anzio.<sup>53</sup>

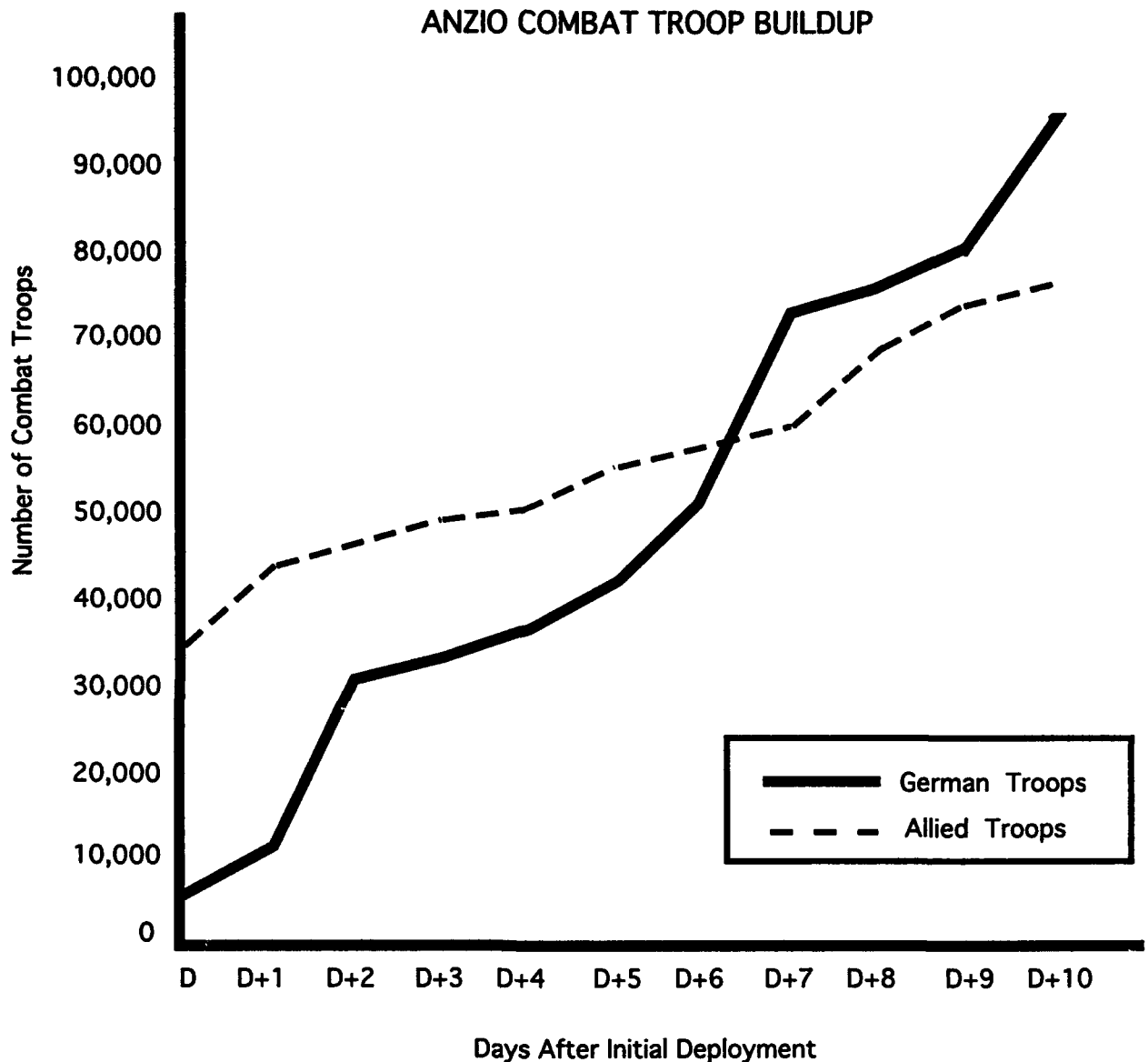
The delay in taking the offensive also gave Kesselring a chance to reinforce his troops. (Figure 4) Units were taken from every where possible—the Balkans, France, the Eastern Front, the Gustav Line, depleted units, new recruits and provisional commands. A rapid reinforcement of Anzio, without drawing troops away from the Gustav Line was totally unexpected by the Allies. For both sides, all available resources were being directed towards the Mediterranean. With the buildup at Anzio, *Shingle*, originally planned as a small diversion, was now a major operation which would eventually reach over 110,000 troops.<sup>54</sup> (see Appendix I and II)

From an operational perspective, at D+3, *Shingle* was doomed. Within two days nearly 40,000 German troops were deployed in response *Shingle*. From that point on, at best the operation could only be a tactical success. Operational momentum—the rapid concentration of forces in time and space was lost. Compounding the problem, insufficient operational reserves existed to counter the German buildup.

### **Battle Ashore**

Absolutely essential to an operational analysis of the battle ashore at Anzio is Lucas' decision to delay major offensive actions. At the operational level of

FIGURE 4



Sources: Major General John P. Lucas, Commander U.S. VI Corps, Unpublished Personal Diary, p. 329; D'Estes, *Fatal Decision: Anzio and the Battle for Rome*, p. 111.

war, the VI Corps lost the initiative. The advantages gained by the complete surprise of the landings had been apparently wasted. However, from an 'operational art' perspective should Lucas be faulted for failing to advance towards the Alban Hills immediately after landing? The answer is clearly—no.

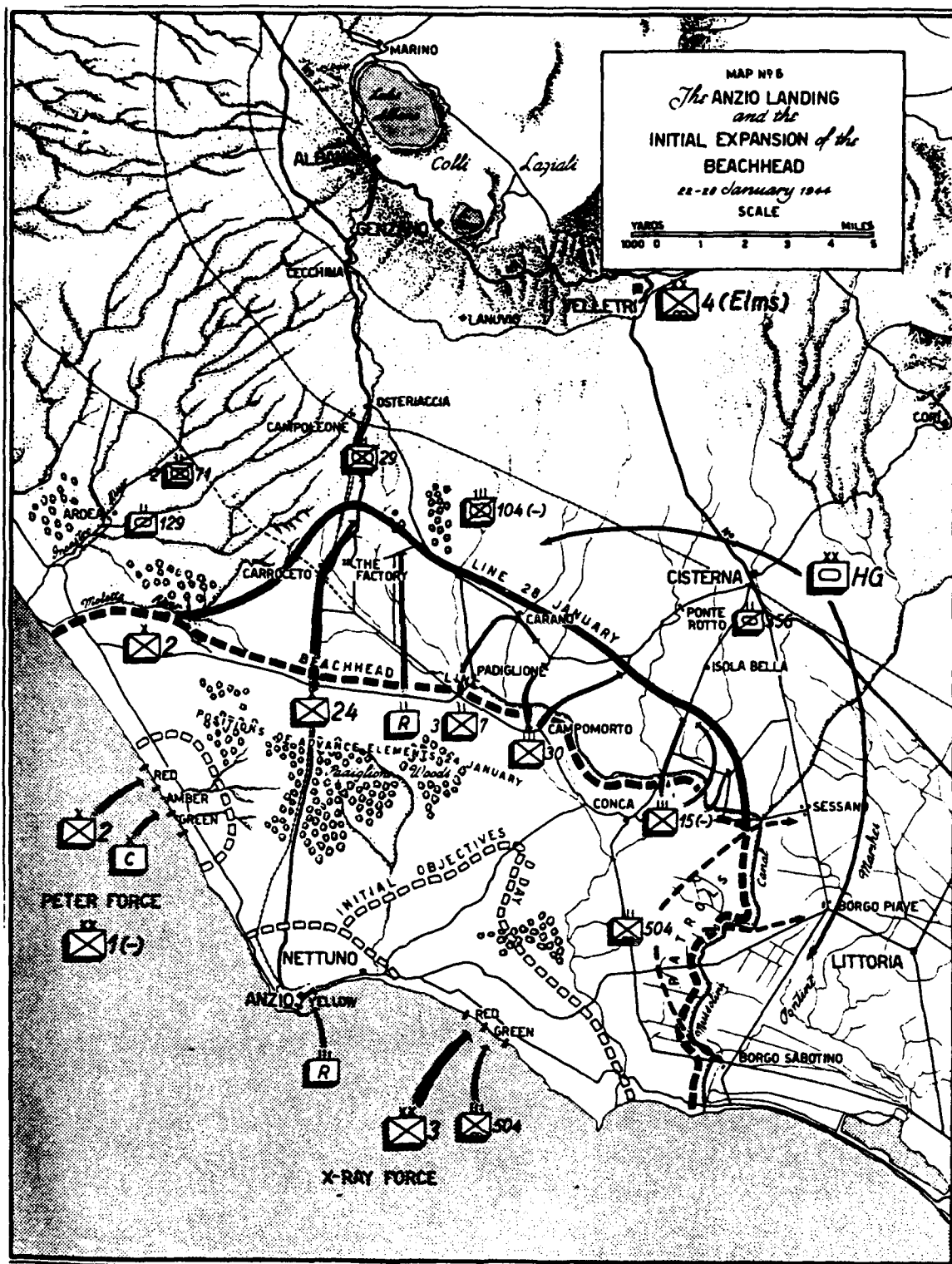
At the operational level, there was a disconnect between the aims and the means. Since *Shingle* was primarily driven by political versus military considerations, limitations were placed on Lucas which prevented success at the operational level. With only two divisions in the initial landing, the potential for enemy resistance and no resupply projected, an advance towards Rome would have been 'suicide'. Lucas may have reached Rome, but his task force would have been cut-off from vital supplies at Anzio. He did not have sufficient forces to hold the beachhead, advance, capture Rome, and defend the extended lines of communication from Anzio to Rome. With the Fifth Army still south of the Gustav Line, the VI Corps would have been crushed by the German Army in northern Italy.<sup>55</sup>

Second, the force composition of the initial landing (light infantry) was not suited for advance through defended territory. The first armored division did not arrive at Anzio until D+10. In addition, earlier plans for paratroopers to land in the Alban Hills, concurrent with the amphibious landing, were abandoned. These all pointed to doubts as to the feasibility of advancing on Rome. Offensive actions with only light infantry, against the expected opposition was high risk.<sup>56</sup>

Finally, the assumption at the operational level that the landing would create a diversion forcing Kesselring to essentially abandon the Gustav Line was overly optimistic. Allied leadership had not considered alternative enemy responses. Kesselring was not likely to panic.<sup>57</sup> The rapid German buildup to 70,000 troops within the first week demonstrated the enemy's resolve.

Following visits to Anzio by both Alexander and Clark, indicating their displeasure over Lucas' lack of aggressiveness, Lucas' first offensive finally took place on January 30th. After making only small advances during a one day offensive, Clark ordered Lucas to take the defensive. With the massive German buildup at Anzio and the lack of progress by the Fifth Army to break the Gustav Line, defense of the beachhead became the priority. (Figure 5)

FIGURE 5  
MAP--INITIAL OPERATIONS AT ANZIO



Source: U.S. Army, Fifth Army History, Part IV, p. 73.

## German Counterattack

Throughout the first half of February the Germans launched a series of offensives to "drive the VI Corps into the sea." Hitler had personally ordered Kesselring to eliminate the "abscess south of Rome" at all costs.<sup>58</sup> During the second two weeks of February, the Allies fought a series of difficult engagements against the Germans gaining key grounds at Campoleone and Carroceto. But, in large the VI Corps had stopped the offensive. On February 22, Lucas was replaced as commander of VI Corps. Major General Lucian K. Truscott, commander of the 3rd U.S. Infantry Division, was named as Lucas' replacement.<sup>59</sup>

The operation had become a battle of attrition. Strengthened with fresh units, several major German offensives took place. However, during the engagements, which resembled the trench warfare during World War I, the Allies were able to hold the beachhead. Under extremely difficult conditions, the battles at Anzio continued throughout the winter. By the end of March a second stalemate existed in Italy. First, Clark's Fifth Army was still deadlocked south of Cassino. Now a second stalemate had developed at Anzio. The Germans were not able to push the Allies into the sea, while the VI Corps could not make any headway in the advance to Rome.

Throughout Operation *Shingle* the Allies were not able to effectively use operational fires to destroy or neutralize critical enemy functions. Although the Allied air forces bombed German lines of communications for months, and ground artillery fired an average of 2,500 tons of ammunition per day—the effect on enemy operations was minimal. To cut-off enemy resupply and reinforcement of the south, the primary target for Allied operational fires was the Italian railway. But, the Allies overestimated the impact of this approach and underestimated the capacity of the Italian railroads. Postwar studies have concluded that in order to make any significant reduction in the amount of supplies reaching the German Army in southern Italy, the Allies needed to

disable 95 percent of the rail network for several days at a time.<sup>60</sup> The Allies did not come close to this.

### **Breakout from Anzio**

After four months of inconclusive but costly fighting, Alexander reorganized his Armies for a massive spring offensive. By regrouping forces along the Gustav Line and reinforcing the VI Corps, Alexander brought the forces at Anzio up to seven full divisions. On May 11, the Fifth Army began its spring offensive to break the Gustav Line. By combining attacks at Cassino with the British Eighth Army and French Expeditionary Corps, the Allied forces were able to break through into the Liri Valley and start a rapid drive toward Rome.

It was at this point that the most controversial operational decision of the battle for Rome occurred. Throughout the first three weeks of May, the VI Corps continued preparations for their offensive. Four plans were developed for the breakout from the Anzio beachhead and drive to Rome. After reviewing the alternatives, General Alexander selected Plan *Buffalo*. This plan called for a concentrated VI Corps offensive at Cisterna and Cori (south of Rome) through the Velletri Gap to cut off Highway No. 6—a critical supply route for the German Tenth Army.<sup>61</sup> Thus, the VI Corps would block the Tenth Army resupply lines, and avenue of withdraw from southern Italy.

On May 22, VI Corps started their offensive from the Anzio beachhead. However, Clark was not convinced that *Buffalo* was the correct approach.<sup>62</sup> Again, political issues between the Allies drove a costly operational decision. *Buffalo* would allow the British Eighth Army to be the first to enter Rome. Throughout the war Clark was obsessed with capturing Rome. After the long fight through Italy he felt, "We not only wanted the honor of capturing Rome, but we felt that we more than deserved it."<sup>63</sup> Besides concerns over the risk of the operation, he saw *Buffalo* as Alexander's attempt to deprive him and the



Fifth Army from this goal. After learning of Alexander's decision, Clark wrote in his diary,

I know factually that there are interests brewing for the Eighth Army to take Rome, and I might as well let Alexander know that if he attempts any thing of the kind he will have another all-out battle on his hands; namely, with me.<sup>64</sup>

In conflict with Alexander's order, Clark directed Major General Truscott to be prepared to execute an alternate plan on short notice.

### Advance to Rome

On May 25, the advance by the U.S. Fifth Army, British Eighth Army, and the VI Corps had reached the outskirts of Rome. *Buffalo* was working better than Alexander had expected. Without informing Alexander, Clark unilaterally ordered Truscott to advance to Rome from the northwest rather than the south as planned by *Buffalo*.<sup>65</sup>

Clark's tactical decision had operational consequences. First, the decision to change the axis of attack directly to Rome—around the German lines of communication—drastically altered Alexander's basic operational idea or scheme of maneuver. Clark's approach reduced the mass of forces to the south of Rome, making that effort secondary to the new main line of attack. It required the VI Corps to stop a major offensive, regroup and redeploy in an entirely different direction. General Truscott who was given the order to abandon *Buffalo*, later stated, "A more complicated plan would have been difficult to conceive."<sup>66</sup> In addition, Clark had underestimated the strength of enemy resistance in the Alban Hills, and it would take another week of intense fighting before the Fifth Army would enter Rome.

As it turned out, Clark's decision allowed the Germans to reinforce the southern route, while the VI Corps began an advance on the more heavily defended northwest route. After five days of costly fighting for both armies, Clark

realized the best way into Rome was in fact the southern approach. He then redirected reinforcement of the U.S. II Corps in the south (the original *Buffalo* plan), cutting off the British Eighth Army which was about to break through to Rome. On June 4, 1944, Clark and the U.S. Fifth Army entered Rome ahead of the British. However, just two days later this operational achievement was overshadowed by the Allied invasion of northern France.

The Allies had achieved their objective, but at a high cost—and it can be argued with little consequence. In short, the Allies failed to use 'operational thinking'. Prior to Churchill's intervention in December 1943, the operation was considered by several operational commanders to be too risky. The means were not adequate to accomplish the mission. For political rather than military reasons, Churchill took a gamble—and lost. Allied leadership underestimated the enemy and overestimated the impact the landing. Although Lucas' lack of aggressiveness is an easy target for blame, Allied leadership prevented success at the operational level of war.

## CHAPTER V

### OPERATIONAL LESSONS LEARNED

The aim at the operational level of war is for every tactical action, battle and engagement to contribute directly to operational objectives—which in turn support strategic objectives. In this regard, Operation *Shingle* must serve as a lesson for future operational commanders. Anzio was a tactical success, but an operational failure.

**A clear objective must be established** The military and political conditions for accomplishing the mission must be clearly understood before initiating a military operation.

**Link between aims and means** When available forces are not sufficient to accomplish the mission, operational commanders must request additional resources or pursue changes to the goals.

**Supporting objectives** Commanders must establish intermediate tactical objectives, which support operational objectives. In support of strategic objectives, operational commanders must develop intermediate operational objectives.

**Center of Gravity** Operations must be focused on the enemy's source of strength—center of gravity—while protecting one's own. An attack on an enemy's vulnerability should only occur if it supports an operational objective—not only to achieve a meaningless tactical gain.

**Phasing** Operational design must go past the initial phase and develop a sequence of actions to achieve operational objectives. Equally important, commanders must include alternative plans to adjust operations based on the outcome of the previous operations. Each phase must be aimed at an objective.

**Unity of effort is essential** During joint and combined operations, teamwork is absolutely necessary. Commanders must ensure military considerations take precedence over political considerations.

**Surprise** Although the element of surprise can be decisive, surprise in and of itself is meaningless—it must be exploited. Operational design should include alternative plans depending on whether or not surprise is achieved. Otherwise, the commander—as well as the enemy forces—may be thrown off balance.

**Operational Deception** Planning should include operational deception to deceive the enemy of friendly intentions and capabilities.

**Economy of Force** Allocation and efficient use of forces and assets, are critical to success. To be effective, secondary efforts must use minimal resources.

**Risk** Operational commanders must ensure political leaders understand the military risk of involved with an operation. Otherwise an operation may be initiated on purely political grounds.

## **APPENDIX I**

### **ALLIED ORDER OF BATTLE**

#### **HQ U.S. VI CORPS**

Major General John P. Lucas  
Major General Lucian K. Truscott (from 22 Feb 1944)

**1st British Infantry Division**—Major General W.R.C. Penney

**3d U.S. Infantry Division**—Major General Lucian K. Truscott  
Brig Gen John W. O'Daniel (from 22 Feb 1944)

**56th British Division**—Major General G.W.R. Templer

**45th U.S. Infantry Division**—Major General William W. Eagles

**1st U.S. Armored Division**—Major General Ernest N. Harmon

**5th British Division**—Major General P.G.S. Gregson-Ellis

**Corps Troops Units**  
First Special Service Force  
Ranger Force  
2d British Special Service Brigade  
504th Parachute Infantry Regiment  
36th Engineer Combat Regiment  
509th Parachute Infantry Battalion

### **ALLIED NAVAL FORCES**

**Task Force 81**—Rear Admiral Frank J. Lowrey, USN

**X-Ray Force (Northern Assault Force)**—Rear Admiral Frank J. Lowrey, USN  
3rd Infantry Division  
U.S. Ranger Force  
230 vessels

**Peter Force (Southern Assault Force)**—Rear Admiral Thomas Troubridge, RN  
1st Division  
149 vessels

Source: D'Estes, *Fatal Decision: Anzio and the Battle for Rome*, pp. 431-442; and U.S. Fifth Army History, Part V, pp. 229-257.

## **APPENDIX II**

### **GERMAN ORDER OF BATTLE**

**Army Group C—Field Marshal Albert Kesselring**

**Tenth Army—General Heinrich von Vietinghoff**

**XVI Panzer Corps**

15th Panzer Grenadier Division

94th Infantry Division

71st Infantry Division

**LI Mountain Corps**

44th Infantry Division

1st Parachute Division

5th Mountain Division

114th Light Division

**Group Hauck**

334th Infantry Division

305th Infantry Division

**Fourteenth Army—General Eberhard von Mackensen**

**I Parachute Corps**

4th Parachute Division

29th Panzer Grenadier Division

65th Infantry Division

715th Infantry Division (Motorized)

114th Jäger Division (Light Infantry)

**LXXVI Corps—General Traugott Herr**

3d Panzer Grenadier Division

26th Panzer Division

Herman Göring Parachute Division

**Battle Group of the 16th Panzer Grenadier Division**

362d Infantry Division

1027th/1028th Reinforced Panzer Grenadier Regiments

Infantry Lehr Regiment (Training Division)

**Source:** D'Estes, *Fatal Decision: Anzio and the Battle for Rome*, pp. 444-448.

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